

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 403

CG 028 973

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TITLE A Systems Approach to Improving Teacher Development in Kansas.
PUB DATE 1997-07-00
NOTE 5p.; In: China-U.S. Conference on Education. Collected Papers. (Beijing, People's Republic of China, July 9-13, 1997); see CG 028 968.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Change Strategies; Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Systems Approach; *Teacher Education; *Teacher Educators

ABSTRACT

At the same time that education faculty face challenges to renew and deepen their commitment to teacher education, the arenas for research, teaching, and service are also changing. New types of partnerships are emerging between universities, schools, and communities. The kind of far-reaching change that is needed to deal with new situations requires concentrated and coordinated reform that cuts across many parts of the system at once. Attempts to change only one part at a time are obstructed by the stasis of the larger system; successful improvement requires coordinated changes in all parts. The outcomes of a 5-year involvement of the School of Education of the University of Kansas in Kansas' Project Partnership is described. Purposes of the project are to: (1) promote interdepartmental collaboration; (2) assist in reorganizing departments; (3) improve the preparation of all educators to meet the diverse needs of students; and (4) develop field-based partnerships. A primary goal has been to develop a model for continuous improvement which will ensure that all teachers are prepared to address the diverse learning needs of all students in today's classrooms. The process of the experience and the involvement of faculty is discussed. (EMK)

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A Systems Approach to Improving Teacher Development in Kansas

Karen S. Gallagher & R.J. Pat Gallagher

Teacher education has been a central component of the University of Kansas' mission since 1864 when Governor Thomas Carney signed authorizing legislation for the University of the State of Kansas. Section 10 of that law states that the university was to have six departments, one of which was "The department of theory and practice of elementary instruction." As the academic scope and diversity of the University of Kansas (KU) grew, the challenges of preparing educators likewise became more complex. In 1909, the School of Education was established, and in 1956, the School moved into its first permanent home, Bailey Hall. Today, the School of Education offers education licensure programs in 85 separate endorsement areas, has 84 full time faculty who are housed in four campus locations, are currently organized into 4 departments and has 2600 undergraduate and graduate students.

As the size and complexity of the School of Education have grown, the University, the School and several departments within the School have achieved national recognition for outstanding scholarship and instruction. In 1997, the School of Education's graduate program was ranked 27 out of 223 schools, and the Department of Special Education was ranked first among special education programs by a *US. News and World Report* survey. The faculty of the School of Education generated nearly \$10 million in sponsored research funds during fiscal year 1996, and, according to a 1997 *School of Education Fact Sheet*, "...most of these dollars were for projects to improve the lives and educational opportunities of children and youth who are at greatest risk for educational failure."

In light of these accomplishments, it would be easy to lose sight of teacher education at the University of Kansas. Faculty in the School of Education must establish or maintain significant records of scholarship, provide high quality instruction, and at the same time engage in tasks which are essential to the School's daily operations. At the same time that School of Education faculty are challenged to renew and deepen their commitment to teacher education, they face other challenges. The University's goals for sponsored research have increased. Reorganization of both the University and the School posed overwhelming demands for change in how individual faculty members carry

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out their work. The arenas for research, teaching, and service are also changing. Through Holmes Group membership, the School of Education has developed Professional Development School partnerships with 5 elementary and secondary schools and is soon likely to develop more such relationships based on recognition that all prospective students should participate in at least one clinical experience in a Professional Development School. Just as the School of Education's Professional Development Schools are expanding, needs for new types of partnerships between universities, schools, and communities are emerging. School professionals must now learn to educate effectively a new breed of student...Those who go into the public schools to make their careers must know how to provide the best possible education to a cross-section of children who personify a new America...

The kind of far-reaching change needed to deal with new situations requires concentrated and coordinated reform that cuts across many parts of the system at once. Piecemeal reform has proven inadequate because of the web of connections among the system's various parts. All of these parts must be tied together. Attempts to change only one part at a time are obstructed by the stasis of the larger system...successful improvement requires coordinated changes in all of these various parts.

My presentation describes the outcomes of a 5-year involvement of the School of Education in Kansas Project Partnership. This project, funded by the United States Department of Education and the Kansas State Department of Education, had 4 purposes:

1. to promote interdepartmental collaboration;
2. to assist in reorganizing departments;
3. to improve the preparation of all educators to meet the diverse needs of students;
4. to develop field-based partnerships.

Although the final evaluation of this project is not complete, my remarks today are based on a comprehensive case study of the School of Education.

In spite of the fact that funding levels available through Kansas Project Partnership are quite small, approximately one-fourth ($1/4$) of the School of Education's faculty have participated in the Project. In each of the School-wide efforts, all faculty who were invited to participate in discussions agreed to do so and even expressed enthusiasm for doing so. Overall, levels of faculty participation have expanded rather than diminished. Initially a select group of faculty who had been involved in related project efforts were invited to attend the curriculum discussions sponsored by the third School-wide project. However, the discussions grew to include a School-wide constituency as faculty actually complained to session organizers about not being invited to participate.

Faculty engagement in ongoing discussions of the teacher education curriculum does not, of course, mean that the curriculum will change or that they believe it should change. Some faculty appear to participate in order to conserve those elements of the curriculum which they worked hard to put into place fourteen years ago. While willing to review the curriculum and consider areas which might need fine tuning, they see the process as evolutionary.

Other faculty appear ready to "...rebuild from the ground up and examine or reexamine every assumption that's been made about the value of preparing students over a five year period and every assumption that's been made in putting together these courses and experiences in the way we now have them."

Faculty who participated in developing the five year program differ in their perceptions of their collective experiences with this process. Some indicate that they felt disenfranchised from the process when they state, "...it was a done deal. It was decided up front that that's what we'd do and we did it without having much to say." Others indicate that "...we all worked really hard to get to the point where we could honestly say 'this is a very strong program.'"

Likewise, some individuals who joined the faculty after the five year program was in place see it as "cumbersome" and reference their judgments to other institutions which they feel have more or less successful in similar efforts. Other new faculty see the program as "needing fine tuning but overall very strong."

The fact that initial discussions of the teacher preparation curriculum focused on the processes and attributes of the five year program is not surprising for several reasons. First, the most obvious and unique attribute of teaching preparation at the University of Kansas is the fact that it *does* occur over five years. For faculty who are new to the University, the length and format of the program is likely to be unfamiliar and, thus, dissonant with their experience and, perhaps, beliefs about how teacher education should be done.

Second, for faculty who went through the process of transforming the program, whether or not they had a voice in the transformation, development of the program in its current state represents the most recent and thus most salient experience with curricular and instructional revision. They may well return to discussions of the five year program to criticize the way it was developed (and imply that future curricular discussions should be different), to praise the way it was developed and to note its current impact in producing good teachers, or to simply reflect on the process as a "warm-up exercise" for thinking again about the curriculum and instruction of teacher education.

While a few faculty who were or felt disenfranchised from the development process or its outcome may, indeed, wish to see dramatic change in how teacher education is delivered at KU, analyses of typical change processes would suggest the far greater likelihood that even those faculty would actually prefer more gradual and incremental changes which allow for reflection on progress and ability to control the future by development of more systematic ways to anticipate the need for change.

Moreover, even within the initial discussion meeting sponsored by the third Kansas Project Partnership subgrant, a number of faculty members noted the need to look more closely at the internal coherence of the program rather than its format attributes.

The primary goal of the School of Education-wide Kansas Project Partnership efforts that I have directed as Dean has been to develop a model for continuous improvement which will ensure that *all* teachers are prepared to address the diverse learning needs of *all* students in today's classrooms. The

focus of these efforts on continuous improvement rather than making changes is significant in considering the impact of Kansas Project Partnership on the School of Education.



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